

STEPTOE & JOHNSON<sup>LLP</sup>  
ATTORNEYS AT LAW

#E1-2095  
RA

David H. Coburn  
202.429.8063  
dcoburn@steptoe.com

1330 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-1795  
Tel 202.429.3000  
Fax 202.429.3902  
steptoe.com

May 25, 2006

**VIA HAND DELIVERY**

Ms. Victoria Rutson  
Chief  
Section of Environmental Analysis  
Surface Transportation Board  
1925 K Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20423

**Re: STB Finance Docket 34284, Southwest Gulf Railroad  
Company Construction and operation Exemption – Medina  
County, TX – Request for Information**

Dear Ms. Rutson:

This will respond to your May 8, 2006 letter requesting information on various noise matters in connection with the Supplemental EIS being prepared for the Southwest Gulf Railroad. We understand that this information has been requested, in part, in connection with the cumulative impacts analysis.

1. Please identify all potential braking zones along each of the seven alternative rail alignments being studied by SEA (Proposed Route, Alternative 1, Alternative 2, Alternative 3, Eastern Bypass Route, the MCEAA Medina Dam Alternative, and SGR's Modified Medina Dam Route).

**Assuming the braking zones are defined as those located in the vicinity of and in advance of stopping areas, the potential braking zones for each of the alignments will be located near the UPRR main line, , in the area near the point of entry into the proposed quarry site and, in the case of the two Eastern alignments described on the table below, at the point of approach to curves on those alignments. The table below summarizes the station number where those braking zones are projected for the proposed route and the five alternative alignments as submitted by SGR. SGR has no information on the MCEAA Medina Dam Alternative, but would suggest that braking zones for this alternative will be very similar to those of the Modified Medina Dam Route. The station numbers referred to in the chart below correspond to the station numbers shown on maps previously supplied to SEA under cover of SGR's September 7, 2005 letter.**

Southwest Gulf Railroad - Medina, Texas  
Potential Braking Zones

Alignment	Begin. Station	End Station
Proposed Route	0+00	30+00
	370+00	400+00
Alternative 1	0+00	90+00
	460+00	490+00
Alternative 2	0+00	30+00
	350+00	380+00
Alternative 3	0+00	30+00
	370+00	400+00
Modified Medina Dam Route	0+00	30+00
	60+00	90+00
	530+00	590+00
Eastern Bypass Route	0+00	30+00
	70+00	100+00
	460+00	490+00

2. Please provide a map showing a detailed footprint of the quarry with “limits of blasting” and proposed rail loading areas shown, if available.

**See Exhibit A, attached, which is an aerial map of the quarry area supplied by Vulcan. The green lines on the map denote the boundaries of the three properties leased by Vulcan for the quarry project. The yellow lines show the plant area to be developed to support quarry operations, and the light blue lines in the shape of a loop denote the rail loading loop. The reddish/black line denotes the footprint of the quarry (pit) and the “limit of blasting” for the quarry. Please note that the quarry will grow over a 20 plus year period to meet the limits shown on the attachment. All blasting will be limited to the footprint of quarry, other than some minor blasting that may be required during site preparation for the plant.**

3. Please provide the following information regarding quarry blasting activities for SEA’s analysis of cumulative noise impacts: (1) the typical size of the charge per hole and the number and depth of holes or total charge weight; the number of blasts per month (SGR has previously indicated

that blasting would occur five times per week when the quarry is operating at its design capacity); (3) time of the day of the blasting; and (4) information regarding typical quarry noise levels from other similar quarries.

**The shot design for the proposed quarry is predicated on providing adequate shot rock to meet the productive capacity of the facility, while considering the vibration and noise impact of the event. Accordingly, a typical shot will consist of 28 holes, with a pattern of 16 feet of burden and 18 feet spacing. These holes will be 6.5 inches in diameter and are 50 feet deep. The charge weight per hole will be 559 pounds. This shot size will require Vulcan to blast about 5 times per week (and thus about 20 times per month). We anticipate the blast events to normally take place anytime between 11:00 A.M and 4:00 P.M. Air overpressure models predict this charge weight to produce 125 dbL at 1,015 feet, diminishing as the distance to the blast location increases. The duration of each blast event should be less than one second.**

**Information regarding typical quarry noise will be submitted under separate cover.**

4. Please provide the following information regarding the loading track area: hours of train activity at the loading track area (same as for the rest of the rail line or different); whether spring-loaded frogs (i.e., crossovers) would be used at the loading track; the maximum train speeds proposed for the tangent (i.e., straight track sections as opposed to radius or curved track) and loading track, with the likely notch setting of the throttle. SEA notes that SGR has previously indicated that it anticipates that track geometry would allow for maximum speeds of 40 miles per hour on all or most of the alternative rail alignments.

**Hours of train activity at the loading track area depend on the time of day a unit train is received at the proposed quarry for loading. Vulcan's proposed facility will have a design load-out capacity which will allow a unit train to be loaded within eight (8) hours. Generally, we anticipate this activity to occur between the hours of 7:00 A.M and 10:00 P.M; however, there may be instances where loading must occur at times other than those stated above in order to meet the operational needs of the Class I railroads.**

**While frog type(s) for the proposed loading track have not yet been identified, SGR proposes to utilize Solid Manganese Self-guarded (SMSG) frogs at the loading track area due to their relatively easy maintenance, compared to the spring frog.**

**The proposed loading track will be designed for a maximum tangent speed of 25 miles per hour, but the expected actual speed of trains on the loading track will be much lower (i.e., 5 to 10 miles per hour). The rail alignments for the tracks other than the loading tracks will be designed for a maximum speed of 40 miles per hour, although average train speeds are expected to be lower as SGR has previously advised SEA.**

Ms. Victoria Rutson  
May 25, 2006  
Page 4

We trust that the above is responsive to your questions. Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David H. Coburn", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David H. Coburn  
Attorney for Southwest Gulf Railroad

cc: Ms. Rini Ghosh  
Ms. Jaya Zyman Ponebshek



Original submitted in color.